

## Facts about HealthierUS Veterans

- The prevalence of overweight and obesity in the United States is 64 percent, and in the population of those receiving medical care in VA is greater than 70 percent. One of the foremost medical complications of being overweight is diabetes.
- There are 20.8 million people in the United States, or 7 percent of the population, who have diabetes. In the population of those receiving medical care from VA, diabetes prevalence is 20 percent.
- The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) have joined forces in an unprecedented collaboration to improve the health of the nation by increasing healthy eating and physical activity among veterans, their families and communities and slowing the increase in obesity and diabetes. This collaboration will be ongoing. Focusing efforts on veterans and their families, these two federal agencies can reach up to one quarter of the entire U.S. population, about 70 million people.
- Titled ***HealthierUS Veterans***, this initiative has five main components: 1) a *Fit for Life Volunteer Corps*; 2) collaboration between VA medical facilities and “Steps to a HealthierUS,” as well as other HHS programs; 3) VA’s *MOVE! Weight Management Program*; 4) a “Prescription for Health”; and 5) a national communication and health promotion campaign.
- In the ***Fit for Life Volunteer Corps***, volunteer Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom veterans, other veterans and members of veterans service organizations, as well as members of their families and communities will become community ambassadors of physical fitness and nutrition. They will exemplify a healthy lifestyle and serve as effective advocates, representing all races, ethnicities, genders and levels of physical ability, including those with disabilities.
- ***HealthierUS Veterans*** will bring together the 40 communities participating in **Steps to a HealthierUS** and the 28 states participating in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) **Nutrition and Physical Activity Program** with local VA facilities. They will implement chronic disease prevention activities to reduce the burden of diabetes, overweight and obesity, and address related risk behaviors, including physical inactivity and poor nutrition.
- The VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (NCP) has developed the ***MOVE! Weight Management Program*** to address overweight and obesity among veterans receiving VA health care. *MOVE!* is evidence-based; offers stepped services from minimal to intensive intervention; involves a multidisciplinary team; is based in primary and ambulatory care settings; and features a computerized patient assessment, treatment planning, and a comprehensive focus on behavior, nutrition and physical activity. Primary care providers outside of VA will have

access to *MOVE!* materials through [www.move.va.gov](http://www.move.va.gov) as resources for overweight and obesity prevention.

- In a collaboration called ***HealthierUS on the MOVE!***, the Secretaries of HHS and VA will visit four communities where there are active “Steps to a HealthierUS” programs and VA medical facilities. A ***HealthierUS Veterans*** Web site will offer connections to available health promotion, nutrition and physical education resources. Public service announcements (broadcast, Web and print media) will promote the importance of fitness and a healthy diet to veterans, their families, communities and the nation.
  
- “**Prescription for Health**” activity prescription pads have been developed to tell patients their body mass index (BMI); explain that an elevated BMI puts them at risk for health problems such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease; and give them a recommendation to increase physical activity. Providers can use a prescription for pedometer use and set a goal of steps to walk each day or a prescription for odometer use with a wheelchair and a goal for distance rolled.

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